

CONTACTS OF MEDIA: Roger Snell or Paula Freeman at DOI, (502) 564-2664; Gelonda Casey, Division of Emergency Management, (502) 607-1628.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, Oct. 4, 1999

Midwest earthquake conference in Paducah

State insurance and emergency management officials host major Midwest earthquake conference in Paducah on Oct. 12-13

FRANKFORT, Ky.— Kentucky and the Midwest must continue preparing for the dangers of being located on the same active fault that created one of the worst earthquakes ever documented, says earthquake researcher and educator Jill Johnston.

Johnston is among several national and regional experts who will lead discussions at an earthquake symposium in Paducah, Ky., on Oct. 12-13. The symposium will focus on the latest scientific data about the New Madrid Fault, building partnerships for safer communities, new classroom materials about earthquake safety for grades K-6, model laws and building codes, and disaster planning.

About 400 guests are expected to attend the Paducah conference, including public, school, construction, insurance and disaster planning officials.

The symposium at J.R.'s Executive Inn, 1 Executive Blvd., Paducah, runs from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CST on Oct. 12 and continues Oct. 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m., concluding with an 11 a.m. news conference with state and local officials and some of the panelists.

"Earthquake: It's Our Fault" is jointly sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Insurance, the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management and the Central United States Earthquake Consortium (a non-profit partnership of officials in Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas).

Paducah was near the center of one of the worst series of earthquakes ever recorded more than a century ago. Between Dec. 16, 1811, and Feb. 7, 1812, a series of earthquakes and after-shocks along the New Madrid fault rang church bells as far away as Richmond, Va., and was stronger than the recent earthquakes that killed more than 4,000 people in Taiwan and devastated Turkey.

According to a published account from Russelville, Ky., on Feb. 19, 1812: "The houses of brick, stone and log are torn to pieces, and those of frame thrown upon their sides. The citizens have fled to the mountains. Merciful God! What a horrid situation."

Here are highlights of some of the speakers and their topics:

Jill Johnston of the University of Memphis Center for Earthquake Research and Information: Johnston will discuss new educational curriculum developed for students in grades K-6. Public, private and church educators in the Midwest can use newly developed coloring books, cartoon characters and classroom materials to teach children about Midwest earthquakes and safety tips.

Ken Ford of the National Association of Home Builders: Ford encourages local and state officials to consider building codes more specifically designed to mitigate damages and losses to homes and businesses.

Karen Clark, founder and president of Applied Insurance Research: Clark's Boston-based company uses computer models to estimate the extent of potential damage depending on the epicenter and magnitude of an earthquake. At least 22 countries rely on these models, which also are used as the basis for hurricane analyses in Hawaii and Florida. She will speak about the "truth about New Madrid."

Tom Williams, Louisville-area disaster specialist for the Red Cross: Williams will speak about being prepared before and after disaster for shelters, mass-care feeding, and damage assessment. He will compare how an unexpected Midwest earthquake compares to the advance warnings of Hurricane Floyd where damaged bridges and roads block rescue efforts. He will offer practical tips of why people need a 72-hour supply of food, First Aid supplies, flashlights, transistor radio and batteries (the general rule is that help is three days away in a disaster).

Alicia Hassman, a Midwest earthquake coordinator and regional claims administrator for 15 states served by Westfield Companies, an Ohio-based insurance company: Hassman will focus on insurance agents developing disaster plans for helping customers even when their own employees are affected by disaster and how to trigger regional and national help from insurance companies.

Registration and a \$50 fee are required for all guests and the general public is invited. For complete registration details, contact conference coordinator Christy Bibb at (502) 564-6046.